

## Foster Care Youth Advisory Board honors 2003 Advocate of the Year

The Northern Region Youth Advisory reviewed nominations of adults who had been supportive to the needs of young people. After taking a look at the contributions made by the adults in their life, the Board selected Kathy Ligus, a Resource Teacher in the Learning Lab at Roosevelt Alternative High School in Rockford to be the 2003 Advocate of the Year.

Ligus was nominated by a student and member of the Youth Advisory board. In the nomination letter this young woman stated “...If Kathy were not there to push me into trying to help myself like she did, I probably would not be graduating next year or learning what I did. Kathy helped my self-esteem because I thought that I could never learn how to do the basic schoolwork.

*She taught me that I could do the work without always depending in her to help me; I try to be more independent when I am working on schoolwork. Anyone can teach but it takes a real teacher to actually take time out*

*to help a student in all kinds of ways. She makes people with no hope accomplish so much. Even though Kathy and I fuss at each other, she still is and always will be my favorite teacher.”*

Ligus brings much experience to the classroom. She is married, has three grown step-daughters and three step-grandchildren. Her secondary education degree is in English with a master's degree in Special Education. Kathy has taught for 29 years; the last six at Roosevelt tutoring regular education students while at the same time working with special education students. The students take individual courses and work at their own pace while in a very relaxed situation. Students are encouraged to call teachers at Roosevelt Alternative High by their first name.

Ligus' favorite day of the year is Graduation Day at the high school.



*Luvenia Sims, Statewide Youth Advisory Board vice-president, and Bryan Austin, Statewide Youth Advisory Board president, congratulate SYAB Advocate of the Year Award recipient Kathy Ligus*

“I love to see them graduate and go on with their lives doing something productive and something to help them reach realistic goals for their future or continuing with further training so they can become productive citizens,” she said.

When Ligus accepted her plaque, she told all those present, “Don’t let anyone else define who you are...not by what you look like, not by who you are with or by the circumstances in your life. YOU define who you are!”

## “Family to Family” reshapes Rockford approach to foster care

Recently, the Rockford Field Office had their first gathering to present the “Family to Family” Program to the Foster Care Alliance. Family to Family is an approach to serving families that strives to develop a network of family foster care that is more neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive and located primarily in the communities in which the children live. In addition, the goal is to reunify children with their families as soon as that can safely be accomplished, based on the child’s and the family’s needs.

DCFS’s Rockford office is embracing the Family to Family model along with Camelot Care Center, Catholic Charities, Children’s Home & Aid Society of Illinois, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, and Maryville Academy.

Diane DeLeonardo, statewide recruitment coordinator, and Jeanette Hamilton, the state manager of “Family to Family” introduced Family to Family with a powerful presentation. While many of the concepts of Family to Family are basic good practice, it was exciting to discover new ways to recruit foster families and methods to support youth and families involved in the child welfare system.

Since “Family to Family” targets foster home recruitment and support in specific areas of the community from which the largest number of children enter

foster care, they chose to meet at Patriot’s Gateway, a local community center located in the heart of the 61104 zip code.

### **Outcomes for Children**

The Family to Family Team is committed to improving results for children and families involved in the child welfare system, including:

- Reducing the number and rate of children placed away from their birth families.
- Among children coming into foster care, increasing the proportion who are placed in their own neighborhoods or communities.
- Reducing the number of children served in institutional and group care and shifting resources from group and institutional care to kinship care, family foster care, and family-centered services.
- Decreasing lengths of stay of children in placement.
- Increasing the number and rate of children reunified with their birth families.
- Decreasing the number and rate of children re-entering placement.
- Reducing the number of placement moves children in care experience.
- Increasing the number and rate of brothers and sisters placed together.
- Reducing any disparities associated with race/ethnicity, gender, or age in each of these outcomes.

### **Strategies to make it Work**

To achieve these changes in the child welfare system, the team is committed to:

- **Recruiting, training, and supporting resource families.** Finding and maintaining foster and kinship families who can support children and families in their own neighborhoods.
- **Building community partnerships.** Establishing relationships with community organizations in neighborhoods where referral rates to the child welfare system are high, and collaborating to create an environment that supports families involved in the child welfare system.
- **Making decisions as a team.** Involving foster parents, caseworkers, birth families and community members in placement decisions to ensure a network of support for the children and the adults who care for them.
- **Evaluating results.** Using self-evaluation teams to collect, analyze, and interpret hard data about child and family outcomes to find out where we are making progress and to determine where we need to make changes in policy and practice.

## Northern Region Advisory Council wants YOU!

The Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council provides opportunities for foster parents with DCFS and private agencies to give input on a variety of important issues facing the foster care system. The Council also relays information on a variety of agency and department programs and procedures. Your participation is valued and appreciated in Council activities.

The Council has selected these areas to be major topics for this year's meetings: foster parent insurance, post adoption and subsidized guardianship services, retaliation, teens, and transition services for youth leaving foster care.

The Advisory Council meets the second Thursday of each month, with dinner served at 6 p.m. and the meeting from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The meetings are held at the DCFS Regional Office, 8 East Galena, Aurora, IL. Meeting dates and focus areas for upcoming meetings are:

March 11	Teens
April 8	Transition Services for Youth Aging out of Care
May 13	Setting Agenda for Next Year

Please RSVP for each meeting to Nancy Dust at 815-967-3730 to ensure sufficient food.

## Talk to your kids about not smoking

Find a good time to talk. Sometimes the most powerful parent-child conversations you have can take place while the two of you are doing something else. Kids tend to be more comfortable if they don't have to look at you directly while they're talking about important issues. Here are a few places and ways to talk about not smoking so that kids can make the right decisions.

- **Shooting hoops.** This is a great time to mention how smoking can affect one's fitness and athletic abilities.
- **Driving.** Smart parents have often utilized this "captive audience" opportunity. Don't launch into a lecture. Instead, ask your child for her opinions.
- **Shopping.** Discuss the price of a carton of cigarettes. Figure out how much smoking costs someone each year. Then talk about what else he could buy for the same amount of money.
- **Watching TV.** Wonder aloud why the director or writer had a particular character smoke. Use this to reaffirm your disapproval of smoking.
- **Going out to dinner.** Ask to be seated in the non-smoking section and use it as an opportunity to talk about not smoking.
- **Have your child teach you something.** It really doesn't matter if it's a computer game or something she learned at school. Most kids feel proud to be able to teach you something new.
- **Eat dinner as a family.** During this important family time, share what each of you has been doing during the day. It's a way for children to learn how you act on your values and beliefs.
- **Adopt bedtime rituals.** Bedtime rituals aren't just for younger children. Preteens and teens are often comfortable talking about things that are on their minds when you say good night to them.

Also, there are some things you can do as a family that will help you talk about both the big and small issues with your children.

## Northern News

### Sponsor

Joseph Beccera  
Regional Administrator

### Regional Reporter

Diane Mitchell  
DCFS Reporter/  
Editor  
107 N. 3rd Street  
Rockford, IL 61107  
Phone: 815-967-3830  
Fax: 815-967-3737



Call with foster parent association news and schedules; local training; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and news articles and support all foster families can use.

# Northern Region Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

**Module 1** - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

**Module 2** - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 3** - *Child Development* - New module being written

**Module 4** - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 5** - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 6** - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 7** - *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 8** - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 9** - *Managing the Fostering Experience* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 10** - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

### College of DuPage Area 630-942-2392

#### Module

**CRYSTAL LAKE - Country Inn**  
March 18 (Thu) & 6:30-9:30 p.m. 8  
March 20 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**ELGIN - Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites**  
April 14 (Wed) & 6:30-9:30 p.m. 4  
April 17 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**GLEN ELLYN - College of DuPage**  
March 27 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m. 9

**KANKAKEE - Lee's Inn**  
April 13 (Tue) & 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2  
April 17 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

### Rock Valley Area 815-921-2301, ext. 2305

#### Module

**DIXON - Loveland Community Ctr.**  
March 3 & 10 6-9 p.m. 9

**ROCKFORD - Location TBA**  
March 10 & 17 6-9 p.m. 7

## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

### College of DuPage Area 630-942-2392

**AURORA** **Comfort Suites**  
March 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**CRYSTAL LAKE** **Country Inn**  
March 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**ELGIN** **Holiday Inn**  
April 24 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**GLEN ELLYN** **College of DuPage**  
March 20 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
April 14 & 21 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**KANKAKEE** **Lee's Inn**  
April 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**ROMEORVILLE** **Country Inn**  
March 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**WAUKEGAN** **Ramada Inn**  
April 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

### Rock Valley Area 815-921-2301, ext. 2305

**DEKALB** **Location TBA**  
April 8 & 15 (Thu) 6-9 p.m.

**ROCKFORD** **Stenstrom Center/RVC**  
March 11 & 18 (Thu) 6-9 p.m.  
March 30 & April 6 (Tue) 6-9 p.m.  
April 24 & May 1 (Sat) 1-4 p.m.

**Pre-registration is required for all classes!**  
**Call the number listed for your area.**

## The meaning of Adoption

A group of children were looking at a family photo...

One little boy in the picture had a different color hair than the other family members.

One child suggested that he was adopted.

A little girl said, "I know all about adoptions because I was adopted."

"What does it mean to be adopted?" asked another child.

"It means," said the girl, "that you grew in your mommy's heart instead of her tummy."